President: Well, the motion cannot be taken up.

6. "I beg leave to move that the business of this House be adjourned for discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, (1) the loss and difficulties experienced by the Agriculturists in the State due to the wrong and ignorant application of the Agricultural Income Tax Act and the arbitrary, excessive and inflated approximation of income and consequent arbitrary assessment by the Collectors who are unacquainted with the nature of cultivation, cultivation expenses and the yield in lands in their respective jurisdiction, and (2) the fear of further greater loss and difficulties to be experienced next year due to the application of the New Act XXIII of 1121 with a greater rate of tax by the same or other Collectors."

7. "I move that the House be adjourned to discuss the serious situation arising out of the statement by the food Minister of the Madras Government in regard to the import of Ceylon cocoanuts."

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT.

President: Order, order. Out of deference to this honourable House, I wish to make a statement regarding certain matters that have happened quite recently and indeed after I addressed the Joint Session. The first point on which I shall dwell for a few moments is that the Government announced as a part of their scheme for village uplift, the setting apart of a sum of Rs. one crore from the interests or the return of which, *viz.*, about Rs. 3 lakhs per year, a co-ordinated and comprehensive system of village uplift, according to the needs of each village, could be attempted on a long term programme. It was made clear to Government from the debates and the general discussion that took place elsewhere and also from the trend of newspaper opinion in the State that the honourable members of the Legislature and the country at large wanted something more comprehensive and more immediate and more extensive. Government, in deference to that opinion, have therefore set apart an extra sum of Rs. 10 lakhs for the year 1122 out of the Post-war Reconstruction Fund for the purpose of being spent during the year. Within the period beginning from the 1st Chingom 1122 and ending with the last day of Karkadagom 1122, that sum of Rs. 10 lakhs must be spent. The idea is that the amount should be spent on such problems as directly touch the villager. It is not an amount for benefiting large towns or Municipalities. It is essentially a rural uplift programme that is contemplated. Non-official Central Committee will be contemplated and also

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non-official local Committees. They will decide in what locality or localities a beginning should be made.

One village might want its roads improved, or culverts repaired. Another might want a well. Another might want a village library. Therefore from that point of view, the needs of certain selected number of villages should be considered and during 1122 a sum of Rs. 10 lakhs should be spent over and above the amount available as interest or income from the one crore of rupees already referred to. That was announced in the sitting of the other House, and it is for honourable members to make suggestions as to how best that intention of Government could be carried out.

I next come to a very important matter, *viz.*, the labour situation. In dealing with this situation, I shall be as objective and detached as possible and whatever I say will, I trust, be construed not as antagonistic to labour or hostile to capital. I have not made a secret of the opinion or the policy of the Government that where a conflict arises between capital which is well organised and generally powerful, and labour, the sympathies of the Government will be on the side of labour. So much is this the case that Government have come to a provisional conclusion that in all the concerns in which they have interest, *viz.*, the Rubber Factory or the Fertilisers and Chemicals, a system of participation of the net profits with labour should be introduced, so that the labouring population might regard themselves as being co-participants with the Government in the profits of labour. That has also been announced by the Government in the other House. As I have already stated, where there are legitimate grounds for complaint, suspicion or distrust, and where Government come to the conclusion that the employers do not treat with sympathy the demands of labour, Government's decision will be as far as possible on the side of labour rather than on capital.

Having said that, I must draw a very definite line between that and what follows. It does not mean that labour can always dictate to capital and to Government. It does not mean that because say, rice is not supplied properly in the State, the Alleppey Coir Workers should all strike work. The position with regard to rice may be dealt with at once. I have received the following information regarding Quilon :—

> "There is a general complaint that the quality of rice supplied is not good.
>
> A leaflet, captioned 'general strike for getting rice' published over the names of T. V. Thomas (President) and K. K. Kunjan (General Secretary) details the circumstances which led the managing committee of the All Travancore Coir

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Factory Workers Union to decide to start a general strike of the Coir Factory labourers. Their demands are—

(1) supply of not less than 4½ nazhis of rice per unit;
(2) distribution of good quality rice;
(3) opening of depots for getting other food stuffs such as tapioca, pulses, banana, etc., at controlled prices;
(4) distribution of quota clothing through recognised shops at all times according to the number in the ration cards;
(5) to recognise the people's committees;
(6) to adopt necessary steps for supplying sugar and kerosene to all families; and
(7) to get tea and meals at fixed rates.

The help and co-operation of all the people and the other labour unions are solicited for securing these demands."

I will pause here for a moment. We are now getting, thanks to the conquest of Burma and Siam, rice from those places. The quality of rice is beneath contempt, and we have very strongly protested against the quality of that rice. This is the answer of the Government of India:

"Punjab Government report despatching instructions not received from Travancore Cochin for rice allotted from Punjab, and recipient Governmet bargaining regarding quality Stop please issue despatching instructions immediately accepting all rice fit for human consumption stop please wire action".

The idea is that these Governments are getting the rice after bargaining. If they start bargaining they will not get the rice. Unless it is not unfit for human consumption, they are bound to take the rice that is supplied. Here is another telegram:—

"Please keep Volkarts in funds AAA You must not insist on demanding boiled rice only AAA"

In other words, what they mean is:—"If you pay money to Volkart Bros., they will send you rice. Please do not bargain for quality. If you do so you would not get the rice."

Although it is difficult to accept the kind of rice supplied to us, they have now stated that we cannot insist upon quality. For the whole of August, no rice will be sent to us. Instead, we have been promised wheat flour, atta and American maize. American maize from Canada and the United States and other grains from many other parts of the world are expected to come to us. I have tried to point out to the Government of India that the average citizen in Travancore does not know how to prepare *chappathis* or *pooris*. In Northern India they take this dish with some pepper or chillies and also with some potatoes. That

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is the main food of the people in the United Provinces, Bihar and the Punjab. But people here are not accustomed to make these *chappathis* or *pooris*. Nor is there enough potatoes here. These aspects have been pointed out to the Government of India. When Mr. Kirby was here last, he said : "What is the difficulty about it ! I will show you how to prepare *pooris* and *chappathis*." I said, 'all right.' He then said that a kind of steel plate, over which these should be baked, was required. I said I had not got it. I dare say people in Travancore also have not got this steel plate which they should place on a low fire for making *pooris* and *chappathis*. In fact, my reply was a tremendous shock to Mr. Kirby. The Government of India think that every peasant or cultivator in Travancore has got one of these steel plates and when he gets wheat or atta, he will make *chappathis* and *pooris* out of them with the help of these utensils. I have pointed out to the authorities the difference between North and South India regarding consumption of food. I have partially and not wholly succeeded in my efforts. The real trouble is about the rice that we actually get. Samples of that rice will be distributed now. (Samples of the rice were distributed among honourable members at this stage). This sort of rice is arriving from Siam and Burma. We are asked not to quarrel with this quality. We will either have to take it or leave it. I am afraid to leave it, because they have also stated that if we give up this rice, we would not get any other rice. That is the position. I dare say honourable members have now seen for themselves the quality of rice. We can of course easily get rid of it, and in fact my first impulse was to refuse it. But we were also told that if we do not take this, we might get only wheat but not rice. I thought that practically for the next three or four months, we are in the hands of the Government of India and the various other Governments which are joining up with the United Nations Organisation. All their promises for new supplies have not fructified. The Indonesian Government, in the exuberance of its political emancipation, has promised to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to give all the rice that India needs.

First of all, the rice has not materialised. Secondly, the transport is not available. Thirdly, there is a slight difference of opinion as to who is the ruler of Indonesia, Mr. Shahria or the Duch. Until the question is decided the ships will not be available. Until the ships become available the rice cannot be put on the ship and it will not come. It may come in the course of the next year, but our trouble is between August and November this year. So, Indonesian rice is not coming. Burma and Assam rice, I have shown. Sind and the Punjab insist upon sending

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[President.]

their own bad quality rice because of a lack of central co-ordination and control, because of the Caretaker Government, because of hundreds of other reasons. There is nobody able to dictate to the Sind or the Punjab. And the Cabinet Mission has also accentuated the trouble. There is no central agency today able to dictate to the Provincial Governments that, in the interests of India at large, they must give something of their good quality rice and not have all the good quality rice for themselves and send out all their bad quality rice to other Provinces and States. There is no authority able to do that and that is why we suffer.

Now that being so, to say that there should be a general strike of Coir Factory workers because Government have not been able to impose their will upon the Government of India is not very satisfactory.

Then the other demands that they are making are demands which the honourable House knows. And we are trying to satisfy the people as much as we can. We had at first one set of agency, the Taluk Committees. There was difficulty about the Central Advisory Committee. The Central Advisory Committee made some recommendations which are generally resented. And the Taluk Committee says that their jurisdiction is taken away. So there is nothing special to the Coir Factory workers at Alleppey enabling or entitling them to strike on this basis. If they are troubled, if they are in worry, the whole State is in similar trouble and similar worry.

People are only waiting for this strike in other parts of India. Because this Government went and worried the Government of India and made themselves an awful nuisance with the Government of India, the Government of India got certain markets opened for them. The Government of India is purchasing so much coir ; America is purchasing so much coir ; and Europe is purchasing so much coir goods from Travancore. It was done over-ruling the contentions of our rivals, namely, the jute merchants of Calcutta who are a very powerful body, mainly Scots, and therefore well-disciplined and very business-like. They have been the whole time asking the Government of India not to encourage coir at the expense of jute. Therefore, this strike will not be a matter of small moment. It will mean that if the coir workers strike and the production of coir stops all the efforts made by this Government during the last three years for establishing a market for coir products in Europe will be lost. These people will at once place orders with the jute manufacturers and with other countries.

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Ceylon, quite recently, sent a deputation to Travancore to study coir making in Travancore because they wanted to industrialise themselves. Certain facilities had to be given to Ceylon on account of the comity between nations. Ceylon is starting a very big coir industry. Then there are other countries, for example, the Philipines. There is jute, there is what is called the seisal hemp. There are various other fibres. And recently I read that synthetic fibres were coming into existence. With wood shavings and dust they are going to make synthetic fibres. These are our rivals. So if we lose now, we lose permanently and therefore I am appealing to the coir workers through this House and as far as my voice can reach that they may go on negotiating and negotiating as long as and as forcibly as they like. But to start a general strike at this juncture would be only to benefit our competitors and a general strike will be of very little assistance.

Now we come to Quilon. Here is a report.

> The Action Council chosen by all the Factory Committees at Quilon met on 5-8-46 at the Quilon Factory Workers Union Office, K. P. Janardanan Nair presided. 30 out of the 48 members of the Action Council were present. It was resolved that (1) notices of strike showing their emergent demands are to be given to the managements of all the factories to-day (6-8-46), (2) secretaries of the various Unions are authorised to issue notices, (3) to enlist a volunteer corps of 121 with T. P. Gopalan (Secretary, Factory Workers Union) as Captain and P. A. Abraham (Clerk, Factory Workers Union Office) as Publicity Officer, and (4) to collect 6 as. per head in this connection.

Here is another report.

> "Copies of a printed leaflet in Tamil published over the names of Kalyana Sundaram and K. A. Nambiar, President and General Secretary respectively of the S. I. R. Labour Union, Golden Rock, are in circulation among the railway employees. The leaflet points out the injustice done by the administration to the railway workers and appeals to them to be prepared for a general strike."

Now, those are the strike notices that I have received. So there are to be strikes not only in one industry but in several industries, namely, sands. engineering, textiles, domestic workers, in fact, everybody in Quilon. There is also the coir factory workers strike in which a general strike is contemplated. Of course, we are face to face with the Punalur Paper Mill strike and I have received a letter from a gentleman named Mathew.

> "If the mill.....is closed the full responsibility for the same will rest only on your shoulders. I am issuing a statement to this effect. Also I think it is my duty to deny all the allegations against the Communist Party to which I also belong. Lastly, let me inform you that the way is kept open for a reasonable settlement and I hope you will make a move favourably."

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[President.]

Now, all that I have to say in this connection is to quote what Gandhiji said on the 4th August dealing with strikes, a suggestion to all strikers to make a frank declaration of submission to arbitration or adjudication, and to seek the guidance of the Congress. That can be done here too.

> "Sympathetic strikes must be taboo until it is conclusively proved that the affected men have exhausted all the legitimate means at their disposals and until the Congress has proved to have betrayed or neglected their interest.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> My humble suggestion to all strikers is to make a frank declaration of submission to arbitration or adjudication, to seek the guidance of the Congress."

Mr. V. V. Giri said more or less the same thing.

> " But while the workers have their rights and privileges they have their obligations as well. The Government would protect the rights of workers and their liberty of organisation. I wish to strike this stern note of warning and add that the Popular Government would resolutely establish law and order in the country. No one, be he a worker, an employer or a capitalist, has any right to coerce others to his way of thinking."

Therefore, it is seen that whether it is a popular Congress Government or a Bureaucratic Government or any other kind of Government they have to deal with the matter in the same way. We have always stood in favour of adjudication. The cashew-nut people wanted some decision. They have accepted adjudication. There are at present three adjudicators operating in this State with regard to three labour disputes and I would suggest to all these labour people who are out on this business of strike to resort to this method of adjudication.

I will read another letter.

> "A public meeting of the Coir Factory Workers was held today evening at Alleppey under the presidency of T. V. Thomas to decide whether the workers should abstain from work from tomorrow onwards as decided in the Managing Committee. K. K. Kunjan. V. K. Atchyuthan. K. V. Patrose and R. Sugathan addressed the gathering which numbered about 10,000.
>
> "It was decided to strike work from to-morrow onwards until the Government decide the question of the food problem in the case of labour."

In other words, the labour in Alleppey should be given rations more in quantity and better in quality than anybody else in Travancore. Therefore until that question is decided in favour of the labour in Alleppey, there will be a strike.

> "Prior to the meeting, T. V. Thomas was contacted by the District Magistrate and he was asked to postpone the strike."

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That is, until at least the Government could decide the question, but,

> "He said that the decision did not rest with him but it rested with the labourers:
>
> "T. V. Thomas said at the meeting that phonocoms and representations were made to Government, but nothing has been done by them so far and the labourers have no other alternative but to abstain from work from tomorrow (7-8-1946.)"

Here is a telegram :

> "Assured tomorrow general strike can be avoided if food Director with Division Peishkar come to Alleppey and issue necessary instructions".

This morning Mr. Narayana Aiyar put this telegram before me. I said I had no objection to anybody going to Alleppey, because the strike in Alleppey is going to be a national disaster as big almost as the importation of coconuts from outside to Travancore. If the Coir Workers struck work, our markets might be impaired permanently and I, therefore, told Mr. Narayana Aiyar that I will take the sense of the House on this. No questions and no discussions relating to food control can be answered by him if he goes to Alleppey, and it is entirely for the House to say whether it will excuse him, having regard to this matter. I proposed to send him myself and tell this House that as no questions on P. W. D. can be expected to be answered effectively by Mr. Kumara Das in the absence of the Chief Engineer, similarly, in the absence of Mr. Narayana Aiyar no questions on food can be expected to be satisfactorily answerd.

The only bright spot in the whole business is that the Rubber Factory strike, which threatened to give some trouble at one time, is now over. People have rejoined work. Then,

> "Mr. Divakaran, Secretary, Quilon Coir Factory Workers' Union, reported to Government that rationed foodstuffs were not issued in the Quilon taluk last week and that consequently workers were facing distress. Enquiries made through the Division Peishkar reveal that the allegation is absolutely unfounded. It is seen from the Division Peishkar's report that full ration was issued in the taluk although in instalments on account of some delay in transporting stocks from Cochin".

That is the exact position. I thought it my duty to place these matters before this House.

I have made a statement elsewhere regarding what I consider to be the general move. I have no hesitation in saying that there is a movement being started in the State and that it is not confined to the State, but is practically India-wide. It is a definite movement for the purpose of paralysing all work by

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starting a general strike. I have definitely stated that we have information at our disposal which makes us come to the conclusion that the communist party, I do not say anybody in Travancore, but the international communist party and the heads of the communist organisation, are, to a certain extent at least, responsible for this move. Suddenly we find on the 1st of August, a joint meeting of all the Factory Committees of Quilon held under the presidentship of Mr. N. Srikantan Nair. The demands in the resolutions were:

1. Three months' pay with allowances as annual bonus to be paid in the first week of Chingom next,
2. Establishment of factory depots for ration distribution,
3. 45 hours' work per week,
4. Exclusive allotment of shops for cloth distribution to labourers as a measure of temporary relief and issue of licences to factory depots later for the purpose
5. 15 days' leave with pay per annum. and,

The report continues:

6. "An action council of 48 members was chosen to take such direct action as would be found necessary to get their demands granted. Mr. Srikantan Nair was chosen as the President and T. K. Divakaran, the Convener. The President, the Vice President, and the Secretaries of all the Unions as well as all the conveners of the different factory committees were chosen the members of the Action Council.

"This action council met again yesternight (5-8-1946) in the Quilon Factory Workers' Union Office. 30 members were present and Mr. K. P. Janardanan Nair presided in the absence of Mr. Srikantan Nair. It was resolved therein that notice of strike enumerating the six demands are to be given to the Managements of all the factories this day, (6-8-1946.) The Secretaries of the different Unions were authorised to issue these notices. All the factories of H & C. Ltd., A. D. Cotton Mills Ltd., Thomas Stephen & Co., Ltd., William Goodacre & Sons, all the match factories and all the Saw Mills are included in the strike programme. It was further resolved to enlist a corps of 121 volunteers.....

That is the delightful state of things in Quilon. In these circumstances, it is for this House to decide and for the Government to decide, after such advice as is given by this Honourable House and such suggestions as are made here, whether they can go on in this way. If workers of a particular trade struck work for grievances regarding the management of that trade that can be referred to adjudication. If, in any particular locality, either the Government machinery has

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broken down, or is working faultily or corruptly, Government can undertake to deal with the matter. But these shows of sympathetic strikes and these warnings of general strikes, for purposes unconnected with their work, for instance, in regard to bad quality of food, or 45 hours' work a week etc., are matters which transcend the proper limits of labour organisations and their activities. I am waiting to learn from the honourable members, from their discussions and from the discussions on the budget, on what lines they would advise Government to proceed.

I may say that Government have come to this conclusion, not only from the point of view of Travancore but of the whole country. At some stage or other, a halt must be called and Government have decided to call that halt today in the State, and if, most unfortunately, there is going to be a general strike of every trade and every industry for the purposes which have already been indicated, well, let it come. At the same time, Government are perfectly prepared to have all these matters inquired into judicially and by arbiters. If there are any grievances, they are willing to have them discussed, scrutinised and decided. But if the workers do not want that and if they can work their will on the people by a general strike, then the question arises whether a certain group of population is entitled to utilise their position against the rest. What happened among the scavengers and domestic workers in Quilon is remarkable. I have no special sympathy with Europeans; I just regard the European as a human being entitled to as much consideration as any other human being. And Euroseans in Quilon are not very different from Europeans elsewhere. The domestic workers of these European's have declined to do any work in their houses. If, by that means it is expected that the slogan of 'Quit India' can be carried into effect, I can definitely assert that it will not have any effect. But they are striking in that manner, although I do not see any reason why they should. As I said, I have no particular plea in favour of Europeans, and Europeans here and elsewhere know that I am not over-lenient with them where it comes to a question of dealing with their demands. But it goes against one's sense of chivalry. and national self-respect that we should give rise to the impression that, because the British Government have stated that they are shortly leaving India, we are tyrannising the European community. This is a matter which I want to make absolutely clear. One butler has been dismissed for being offensive and impertinent towards the lady of the house. Unless that butler is reinstated the Quilon Domestic Workers have decided to strike.

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[President.]

All their other demands have been met, and they are willing to go back to work, but they want this demand also to be fulfilled, that one man who was guilty of insulting a lady should be reinstated by the same household. This is the state of things. It appears to me that the time has come when Government and the people must make up their minds as to whether they are accepting the communist mania. In other words, it is a question whether the factory workers and the peasants are going to be prepared for compromises. Fortunately, although very many attempts have been made to stir up the agricultural workers, they have not been wholly successful. I find Mr. Narayana Kurup looking reproachfully at me. Now, this State is wedded to industrial advancement. If we do not make industrial progress, we shall be unable to feed ourselves. The labourers are all patriotic men and their leaders are mostly lawyers, who, I take it are reading the newspapers daily and keeping themselves informed of day-to-day developments. They know that unless this State makes very rapid progress, we cannot live. Even the National Planning Committee with all its adherence to Khaddar and other hand-made industries have stated that unless large-scale industries are pushed on very rapidly throughout India parallel with the hand-made cloth and hand-pounded rice industries, no progress can be made in India. This is not the stage when a general strike should be heeded to or encouraged by the general public, because that will make it impossible for capital and labour to co-operate, and will make it eventually impossible for this State to meet other demands which might successively be made. And surely it will hamper our progress. I trust that honourable members will keep this in mind when they make their budget speeches.

Now, I want to say that the comparative ignorance of the Government of India in regard to the conditions of this State is most lamentable. I am saying this in the hope that what I say will reach the Government of India. Here is a letter which I received: 'You will furnish the Director of Information regarding your surpluses of each kind of cattle feed. That is, Travancore is to supply statistics to the Government of India of all the surpluses that it has of cattle feed, so that it might be exported from Travancore to other parts of India. They know quite well that we are greatly deficient in cattle feed and for that reason we have been suffering badly. But the Government of India want from us information regarding surpluses of each kind of cattle feed giving the prevailing price in each case so that they may impose the price limit and force the same on us. Further, "the Political Depart-

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ment desire that surpluses should be held up until further advice and request that necessary instructions in the matter may kindly be issued to the authorities concerned." So then, anybody who understands South India could not ask for this kind of information. I am going to protest strongly against this kind of demand from us. Honourable members will realise that this is the position which we have to deal with. Further, we have to get our food, textiles etc. In the matter of textiles, we have pointed out that the people here do not wear the same kind of cloth as the other parts of India. Here the length of the cloth is different; the breadth is different, the texture is different, the quality too is different. I made an objective demonstration of the *mundu* in Delhi when I was there with the person in charge of the Department. Nevertheless, we are given a curtain for a cloth, sometimes shirtings in response to the demand for cloth. The whole position is like that. That is the position *vis-a-vis* the rest of India also. That involves the reiteration of the specific needs of Travancore. Again, if we are handicapped by our people starting a general strike, honourable members will see where we are.

Now, honourable members could have seen how the Agricultural Income Tax is being imposed in Madras and in Behar. I have seen the proposals which are under their contemplation towards that question and I may say that they are much more drastic than in Travancore.

There is one more matter before I close. The Travancore Government Gazette was being supplied to various persons at certain rates. It is now found that it is very profitable to order a number of Gazettes and sell them because the price of waste paper is much more than the price that is charged for the Gazette. It is also seen that many persons subscribe to the Gazette from a purely speculative point of view as an year's gazette weighing about 50 to 52 pounds fetches about Rs. 13 while the subscription is only Rs. 8 per annum. The people, rather the subscribers collect the Gazette and sell it in the market as waste paper. A person will secure Rs. 13. Therefore we have to deal with the matter in one of two ways. Either to make a reduction in the number of Gazettes to be supplied, *i. e.* supply only to those responsible people who are not likely to make use of it in this fashion, or, to raise the subscription of the Gazette to the market level. The Government have not come to any conclusion on this matter but I think it to be a matter of public importance which honourable members might know something about.

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